



# **NEWS RELEASE**

*from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

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David Klinger 503-231-6121 (o)

503-246-8346 (h)

Phil Million 202-208-4131

## **FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO DIVIDE ITS PACIFIC REGION; CITES RESOURCE ISSUES AS NEED FOR GREATER PRESENCE IN CALIFORNIA**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Acting Director John G. Rogers announced today that the Service proposes to divide its Pacific region, currently headquartered in Portland, Oregon, into two regions. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt had asked the Service to consider alternatives to the present regional system in response to the growth and complexity of natural resource issues in the West.

The move would establish a new regional office in Sacramento, California, which would administer the activities of the Fish and Wildlife Service in California and Nevada. The regional office in Portland will continue to supervise the Service's programs in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Hawaii and the commonwealths and territories of the Pacific basin.

The Department of the Interior is now consulting with Congress on the proposal.

As part of the plan, Michael J. Spear, regional director in Portland since 1994, has been asked to assume directorship of the proposed California/Nevada region. The regional directorship in the Pacific region is yet to be determined but Thomas J. Dwyer, deputy regional director, will assume these responsibilities on an interim basis.

The creation of a new administrative region in the Fish and Wildlife Service -- the first such split since 1971 when an independent Rocky Mountain region was created in Denver -- would acknowledge the growth in fish and wildlife issues in California and Nevada involving habitat conservation planning, water management and allocation, and refuge operations. California, already home to more than 30 million people, is projected to grow by more than 58 percent by the year 2020; growth in metropolitan areas of Nevada has been similarly explosive.

*Office of Public Affairs  
1849 C Street, NW  
Room 3447  
Washington, DC 20240*

*(202)208-5634  
FAX (202)219-2428*

"Managing the Service's California and Nevada activities out of Sacramento recognizes the importance of wildlife issues in these two states and would allow the agency to be even more responsive to local needs," Rogers said. "California's economy is surpassed by only six nations of the world and its unprecedented growth presents challenges for the management of natural resources unmatched anywhere else in the United States. Our presence in that state should help the Service keep pace with the acceleration of those issues.

"The Pacific Northwest and the Pacific basin have, likewise, experienced a tremendous surge in natural resource issues linked to growth, loss of habitat, and declines in fish and wildlife species," Rogers continued. "This is an opportunity for the Fish and Wildlife Service to devote expanded attention to resource issues in these sections of the Nation."

The Service's activities in Portland would focus on continuing Columbia River and Pacific basin issues, including forest-related habitat conservation planning, fisheries management, and refuge operations.

Currently there are approximately 1,700 employees in the Service's six-state Pacific region, which ranges from the Sawtooth Mountains of central Idaho to the atoll of Midway in the mid-Pacific Ocean. The Fish and Wildlife Service has had a presence in Portland since the late 1940's, at that time managing its operations in the far West and Alaska from that location.

Although an undetermined number of Service employees from Portland could eventually transfer to the new regional headquarters in Sacramento, the overall number of Service employees within the six-state area would remain approximately the same under this plan. The Service already maintains a field office in Sacramento.

The Fish and Wildlife Service currently has regional offices in seven locations -- Portland, Oregon; Anchorage, Alaska; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Lakewood, Colorado; Twin Cities, Minnesota; Atlanta, Georgia; and Hadley, Massachusetts.